

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **A-18**WASHINGTON POST
18 August 1985

Contra Wants 'Nonlethal Aid' To Include Planes, Trucks, Boats

U.S. Has Yet to Define \$27 Million Humanitarian Program

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The \$27 million that the United States has agreed to provide in "nonlethal aid" to the rebels fighting the Nicaraguan government will be spent not just for food, medicine and clothing but for small airplanes, trucks, jeeps, boats, outboard motors, parachutes and communications equipment, if Adolfo Calero has his way.

Calero, head of the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces, the largest group of counterrevolutionaries, or contras, acknowledged in an interview here last week that his wish list might become controversial in Congress, where debate over the aid focused on how to define "humanitarian assistance." President Reagan signed the appropriations bill containing the \$27 million on Friday in California.

Calero said he is only seeking what his forces need. "I would love to have some helicopters," he added.

The definition of the "humanitarian aid" Congress approved has not been determined. State Department officials have said they do not plan to go beyond the intent of Congress, but Congress was divided on the issue. Also, the legislation prohibits the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Department from administering the aid program but does not say how it should be run.

An aide to Rep. Michael D. Barnes (D-Md.), head of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Western Hemisphere affairs, said the items on Calero's list "do not fall within the parameters of human assistance as we define it. Barnes' view is that it means food, clothing and medicine, period," the aide said.

House and Senate debate on the issue was heated. In an April 24 exchange with House Republican Leader Robert H. Michel Jr. (R-Ill.), Barnes warned that the aid could be "logistical support for an army" and wondered whether it would include "airplanes, helicopters, uniforms, construction equipment, trucks, helmets, dynamite?"

Michel said it was "a bald-faced lie to characterize it" as military aid.

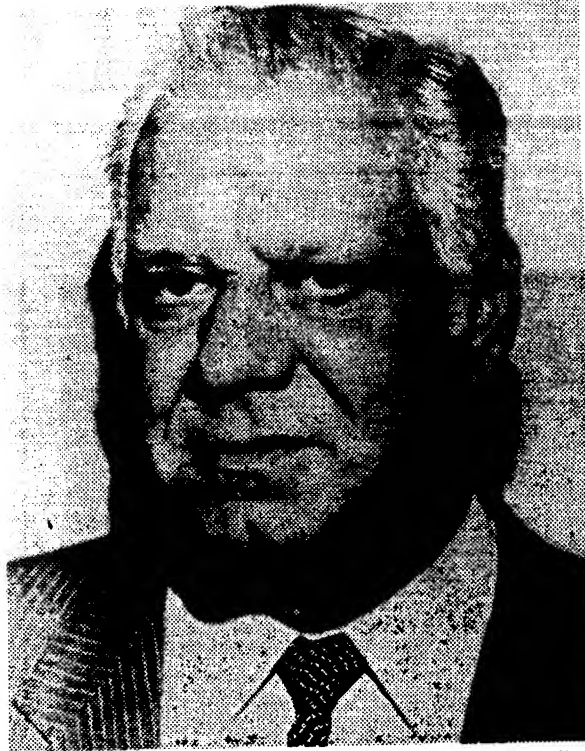
An aide to Rep. Dave McCurdy (D-Okla.), chairman of the oversight subcommittee of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, said the law "excludes vehicles or materials that can be used to inflict serious bodily harm or death. We're going to watch that very closely . . . if there's any indication the money is being used for military purposes, the coalition [that passed it] would fall apart," the aide said.

Calero said he and other leaders of the United Nicaraguan Opposition, Arturo Cruz and Alfonso Robelo, plan to meet in Miami this week to agree on a final list of their needs to be given the State Department.

State Department officials said an interagency group will decide whether the items can legally be provided to the counterrevolutionaries. "Nobody intends to go around what Congress wants. That would just be stupid," one official said.

He added that a memo outlining a new "Office of Humanitarian Assistance" in the State Department to administer the program was awaiting the return from California of Robert C. McFarlane, Reagan's national security affairs adviser, who is expected to approve the proposal.

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Adolfo Calero: "I would love to have some helicopters."

Calero said he would like the planes to be DC3 transports. A used Hughes 500 helicopter that can carry more than a dozen people can be purchased on the international market for about \$150,000, he said, and parachutes would be used to drop food and medical supplies to troops in remote areas.

Calero again predicted that his troops will be in Managua in 10 to 12 months, without having to hold territory permanently or declare a shadow government. Constant defections to the rebel side, continual Sandinista military losses and rising public unrest will cause the Sandinista leaders "just to get on a plane and leave, like Somoza did," he said, referring to the departure from Nicaragua in July 1979 of former dictator Anastasio Somoza just before the Sandinistas took power.